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THE MILITANT

A SOCIALIST NEWSWEEKLY PUBLISHED IN THE INTERESTS OF WORKING PEOPLE

VOL. 73/NO. 26 JULY 13, 2009

INSIDE

'Courage and discipline': most important traits of revolutionaries

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Washington forms new command in Afghan war

BY SETH GALINSKY

The newly appointed four-star general heading Washington's war in Afghanistan has established a Pakistan Afghanistan Coordination Cell. The move aims to more effectively prosecute the war in Afghanistan and neighboring border regions in Pakistan where U.S. and NATO forces have faced difficult fighting.

Establishment of the structure and its operations has the backing of the Pakistani government and military, which has been waging its own war against Taliban forces based in Pakistan.

In an unprecedented move, the Pentagon has given carte blanche to Gen. Stanley McChrystal to handpick some 400 combatant officers for his new command cell. McChrystal's nomination to head up the U.S. and NATO forces in Afghanistan was approved unanimously by the Senate June 10.

The vote took place shortly after Adm. Michael Mullen, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, called Senate majority leader Harry Reid and asked for quick approval saying "McChrystal is literally waiting by an airplane" to head to Afghanistan. Not even the confirmation of Gen. David Petraeus as chief of U.S. Central Command, which is in charge of U.S. forces in the Middle East and Afghanistan, was unanimous.

McChrystal replaces Gen. Da-

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Honduran president ousted in army coup

Workers resist military, police repression

Above: Reuters/Oswaldo Rivas
Inset: Militant/Brian Williams

Above: Honduran soldiers arrive at presidential home in military coup June 28. Inset: March against coup to UN Building in New York June 29.

BY SETH GALINSKY

July 1—Honduran president Manuel Zelaya was ousted by the military June 28. Zelaya is among a number of presidents elected in Latin America over the last half decade who have promised social reforms as the pressures of the spreading capitalist economic crisis bears down upon working people across the region.

Soldiers grabbed Zelaya at gunpoint at his home in the early morning and forced him to board a plane to Costa Rica. The coup took place just hours before a referendum on calling a constitutional convention that could end term limits for the presidency was to take place. The Honduran congress voted to replace Zelaya with Roberto Micheletti, the owner of a large transportation business and former Zelaya

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U.S. Navy shadows N. Korean cargo ship

BY BEN JOYCE

A U.S. warship is following a North Korean cargo boat in the South China Sea under the pretext that it may carry "banned cargo."

In another threat against North Korea, the Pentagon is deploying a ground-based missile system in Hawaii and a sea-based radar system nearby.

The *Kang Nam 1*, which left the port of Nampo June 17, is the first vessel monitored under the cover of UN sanctions.

On June 12 the UN Security Council passed a resolution that tightened sanctions on North Korea. The resolution expanded a list of "banned cargo" they insist not be transported to or from North Korea, as well as imposed further financial sanctions. The resolution was in response to North Korea's second test of a nuclear bomb.

The resolution calls on UN member states to inspect all cargo in their territory going to and from North Korea if they have "grounds to believe" it may be related to the production or sale of any weapons, with the exception of small

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'Tom Leonard made politics accessible to worker militants'

BY AMANDA ULMAN

HOUSTON—Tom Leonard's six decades as a communist militant and leader of the Socialist Workers Party were celebrated here June 27. The meeting, held at the Socialist Workers Party election campaign headquarters, was attended by some 30 people. Leonard died in Houston June 11 at the age of 84.

Speakers included SWP National Committee member Norton Sandler; B.J. Case, a leader of the fight by oil workers locked out by Crown Central Petroleum in the mid-1990s; and Jacquie Henderson, from the SWP branch in Houston. Steve Warshell, organizer of the Houston SWP branch executive committee, chaired the meeting.

Case met Leonard while locked out by Crown in 1996, in a fight that included defending workers from a civil lawsuit by the company charging 14 workers with more than 400 acts of sabotage. "For six long years," Case explained, "we were helped every day by people we never met. Tom was one of many who came. He probably spent the most time with all of us." Case emphasized Leonard's contribution in helping the locked-out workers reach out and win solidarity from other unions, from Black farmers, and others during their hard-fought struggle.

Henderson described the many public talks and forums Leonard gave across the United States and in Australia and New Zealand in 2002 as part of his work on the Maritime Project Fund. The fund enabled Leonard to work on pulling together the experiences of the SWP union fraction in the maritime industry. "He threw himself into his work," Henderson said. "He made party history accessible to those joining the movement."

Leonard joined the party in 1951. He lived in Houston for 28 of almost 60 years in the party. Sandler described the many important political developments in which the party branch in Houston took part during this time.

The SWP branch in Houston was

Continued on page 10

In firefighters case, high court deals blow to affirmative action

BY CINDY JAQUITH

In a 5-4 decision that weakens the labor movement, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled June 29 in favor of 17 white firefighters and one Latino who charged they were victims of race discrimination by the city of New Haven, Connecticut.

The city had given an exam in 2003 for promotions to lieutenant and captain. The scores of African American and Latino firefighters were about half those of white firefighters. No firefighters who were African American and only two who were Latino were eligible for immediate promotion on the basis of the test results, while 17 whites qualified.

New Haven officials threw out the test results and decided not to promote anyone, based on compliance with Title VII of the 1964 Civil Rights Act. It says testing that has a "disparate impact" on one group can be discriminatory. The 18 firefighters sued the city, but lost, and appealed up to the Supreme Court.

Writing for the majority, Supreme

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Iranian gov't clamps down on protests

BY BRIAN WILLIAMS

The government in Tehran filled the streets of Iran's cities with armed militia and cops to stem protests by hundreds of thousands for democratic rights in the wake of the June 12 presidential election. Since June 21, much smaller actions have been met by assaults by riot police, paramilitary forces, and the Guards of the Islamic Revolution, also known as Pasdaran.

Iran's supreme leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, ordered a halt to pro-

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Australia rally defends 2 charged in abortion case

BY LINDA HARRIS

SYDNEY, Australia—Supporters of abortion rights rallied in Brisbane June 10 to protest the prosecution of Tegan Leach for having an abortion, and her partner Sergie Brennan for helping her.

The rally called for the charges to be dropped and demanded that the Queensland Labor government remove abortion from the criminal code.

This is the first time in 50 years that criminal abortion charges have been brought against a woman in Australia.

Leach, 19, has been charged with procuring an abortion and faces a maximum penalty of seven years in jail. Brennan, 21, charged with attempting to procure an abortion and supplying drugs to procure an abortion, faces a maximum term of three years.

The couple appeared in the Cairns Magistrates Court on June 11. They have been charged under the 1899 Criminal Code of Queensland. Anna Bligh, Queensland State Labor Party premier, defended bringing the charges against the couple despite the reaffirmation by the Labor Party state conference in June that those sections of the law should be repealed.

The couple allegedly arranged to get the abortion pill misoprostol from a doctor in Ukraine. This drug, which is used safely in Ukraine, the United States, and other countries, is legal but not easily available in Australia.

Misoprostol is often used together with RU486. Doctors and distributors of the pill in Australia have faced steep hurdles in getting approval to make it widely available.

Caroline de Costa, the first doctor in Australia to legally dispense RU486, condemned the prosecution of Leach and Brennan. "I would like to see [abortion] removed from the Criminal Code," she said in an ABC interview April 6. "I think that the regulations covering abortion should be in the health regulations, as is every other health procedure and service . . . that's where it belongs in the 21st century."

De Costa has stopped prescribing the drug until the legal situation of her patients is clarified.

The Pro-Choice Action Collective has organized protests in Brisbane demanding the decriminalization of abortion and the dropping of charges against the young couple. "A visible movement on the streets is essential," said Emma Tovell, one of the organizers of the protests.

Abortion has been removed from the criminal code in the Australian Capital Territory, Western Australia, and Victoria, but in the latter two states, in the process of decriminalization new laws restricting abortions were adopted.

Hundreds protest California cuts to HIV funds

Militant/Eric Simpson

SACRAMENTO, California—Several hundred protesters converged on the state capitol here June 10 to protest devastating cuts to AIDS programs across the state. Busloads of demonstrators drove up from Los Angeles, San Francisco, and Fresno.

State legislators are considering a budget that cuts more than $80 million in drug subsidies, AIDS education, and AIDS prevention programs. The spirited rally had a simple message: "No cuts!" Protesters explained that cuts in subsidies for expensive retroviral drugs will cost lives.

A few days earlier, hundreds rallied at a Los Angeles cemetery to defend AIDS programs. A rally of several hundred also took place in Palm Springs, California, the same day.

—ERIC SIMPSON

More workers unable to afford needed medicines

BY BRIAN WILLIAMS

The rising cost of drugs is putting them out of reach for growing numbers of working people.

According to a report in the *New York Times* in June, national surveys consistently find that a third of respondents are not buying their prescriptions because of the cost, up from a fourth three years ago.

In Rocky Mount, North Carolina, where the official unemployment rate has doubled to 14 percent in a year, Dr. John Avent, a physician treating many low-income workers, told the *Times* that at least 80 percent of his patients do not take the medicines he prescribes.

"They'll say, 'Well, Doc, I just couldn't afford it; I've been out of it for a month now,'" said Avent. "By that time, of course, their blood pressure is highly elevated."

Dr. Daniel Minior, who directs the emergency department at Nash General Hospital in Rocky Mount, said that among those unable to afford needed medications are younger and working-age people.

Jimmie Bryant, 56, told the *Times* that while working he could only afford to alternate between two of his prescriptions, week to week. Recently laid off, he tried to get refills from his physician but was told he first had to schedule an office visit for $120.

Those enrolled in Medicare have been among the hardest hit. Medicare does not include drugs as part of covered medical benefits. Instead it encourages patients to enroll in a Medicare-approved private insurance drug plan.

Much of this private coverage is based on complicated contracts that are difficult to comprehend and often include hidden higher costs. In many cases specialty drugs, used heavily by the elderly, are placed in a higher price tier where individuals must pay up to 33 percent of the cost.

When the Medicare drug program was initiated in January 2006 it was a big profit boon to the pharmaceutical companies. In the first six months of this program, pharmaceutical industry profits increased by more than $8 billion, according to a congressional report issued by Rep. Henry Waxman in September 2006.

THE MILITANT

Iranian masses fight for political space

In the largest protests in the streets since the 1979 Iranian revolution, hundreds of thousands have demonstrated for democratic rights in the wake of the June 12 presidential elections. Follow the developments there week by week in the 'Militant.'

One of many demonstrations in Iran during June presidential elections.

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Editor: Sam Manuel

Managing Editor: Martín Koppel

Business Manager: Angel Lariscy

Editorial volunteers: Tom Baumann, Róger Calero, Ved Dookhun, Seth Galinsky, Cindy Jaquith, Ben Joyce, Omari Musa, Doug Nelson, Jacob Perasso

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The Militant (ISSN 0026-3885), 306 W. 37th Street, 10th floor, New York, NY 10018. **Telephone:** (212) 244-4899
Fax: (212) 244-4947

E-mail: themilitant@mac.com

Website: www.themilitant.com

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Latvians protest sharp cuts in standard of living

BY CATHARINA TIRSÉN

RIGA, Latvia—Several thousand people demonstrated outside parliament here June 18 to protest the government's most recent austerity package, adopted two days earlier, which further slashed public sector wages by 20 percent and pensions by 10 percent. The protest was the most recent in a string of demonstrations this spring by working people and students in Riga against the effects of the crises.

"Don't steal from poor pensioners," read one placard. "Happy teachers mean good education," read another.

The International Monetary Fund (IMF) and European Union have insisted the Latvian government reduce its budget deficit to 5 percent of gross domestic product as a condition for loans. An IMF official told Reuters he hoped the budget cuts would reassure investors that the country's currency, the lat, would not have to be devalued.

On January 13, 10,000 people demonstrated against austerity measures announced in December. In February 1,000 farmers, many of them on tractors, blocked roads in protests forcing the resignation of the agriculture minister. The entire government resigned later that month.

Mark Allen, the IMF representative for Central Europe, told Reuters that the cuts were "heroic," but might not be enough. The Latvian government is trying to maintain the lat's peg to the euro. Allen warned that a devaluation of the lat would affect neighboring Baltic countries. "As soon as one goes, the market, like a pack of wolves, goes after the next weakest. It's a most unseemly spectacle," he said.

The Latvian government is also seeking major cuts in government services such as education and health care.

Ilmars Znotins/AFP/Getty Images

Protest organized by trade unions in Riga, Latvia, June 18 against government austerity drive. Placard reads: "Hands off the pensioners." Government passed bill two days prior cutting public sector wages by 20 percent and pensions by 10 percent.

"The government wanted to lower teachers' wages by 20 percent and fire as many as one-third of the teachers," said Astrida Harbacevica, national president of the Latvian Education and Science Workers Association, in an interview here May 29. The response of the union was to mobilize over 10,000 teachers from all over the country in a spirited protest march April 2. "We wanted to show the government that we are the union, we are together, we wanted to show our force and solidarity," said Ligata Semjonova, president of the local branch of the union in Riga.

On May 28 the union agreed to a settlement that lowered wages 20 percent for the duration of the crisis. "This means a teacher will have about the same wages as a shop assistant," Semjonova said. As part of the settlement, the government agreed to maintain the same workload and lay off fewer teachers than initially proposed. That agreement, however, preceded the most recent austerity package.

Students in Riga have demonstrated several times during the spring. In one protest outside the university building April 23, the students put up tents and baked potatoes, Zane Skreija, education secretary of the student organization at Riga Technical University, told the *Militant*.

"We are baking potatoes because many students won't have enough money to live, let alone finance their studies," student leader Krists Avots told the German Press Agency. "The only thing they will be able to afford will be potatoes for breakfast, lunch, and dinner."

Students also organized a protest march May 5. All the different student organizations marched to meet with the minister of education.

There are no more demonstrations planned right now because of exams, said Skreija, "but we will continue to protest. We must continue and then maybe someone who listens will figure out what to do about the crises."

Antiabortion rightists pushed back in Wichita

BY MAGGIE TROWE

WICHITA, Kansas, June 20—Defenders of women's rights pushed back Operation Rescue and other antiabortion rightist outfits who had planned today to encircle the clinic operated by Dr. George Tiller, the slain abortion provider. Supporters of women's rights responded to a public appeal by the National Organization for Women to mobilize to defend the clinic.

Forty-five women and men, both new activists and seasoned veterans of clinic defense, gathered outside the Women's Health Care Services clinic.

The defense guard was present from 9:30 a.m. until 4:15 p.m. At dusk, after most of the guard had dispersed, a small group of rightists placed flowers at the clinic fence, but left a few minutes later after two clinic defenders showed up.

The clinic has been closed in the wake of the May 31 fatal shooting of Tiller as he was attending church. The man accused in the killing is a longtime cadre of antiabortion and incipient fascist groups that carry out harassment of abortion providers and women seeking abortions.

Marla Patrick, coordinator of Kansas NOW, told the press, "Our original intent was to prevent them from doing their proverbial dance on a murdered man's grave. The fact they changed plans tells me we were successful."

Trina Wheeler, copresident of Wichita NOW, and a central organizer of the action, said, "I think we've had a little victory today." Wheeler organized a rotation of volunteer guards to get water and breaks during the six-hour defense.

Young activists made placards and covered them with plastic wrap against the rain, carried out surveillance of the rightists' activities at the Operation Rescue headquarters, and sent out appeals to help reinforce the defense lines when needed.

Throughout the day rightists, including Operation Rescue leader Troy Newman, drove by the clinic to take photos, write down license plate numbers, and yell at the defense guard.

On the defense line spirits were high. Throughout the day there was a discussion on what the rightist attacks signify, and how they can be defeated.

Amber Barnes, 24, a student at Wichita State University and a dancer, told the *Militant*, "I'm here for my rights. I'm here because someone died, and he was brave enough to go in there every day for our right to choose. I think Operation Rescue was scared because there were so many people out here."

Cam Gentry, 59, said, "I've been doing clinic defense since 1991 here and at two other clinics. What's next? We need to get young people involved. I was encouraged that the March for Women's Lives [in 2004] had a lot of young people."

Those defending the clinic also discussed the need to have a new abortion provider in Wichita.

Nicki Scheid, 32, who recently got involved by going to a rally to prevent funding cuts for Planned Parenthood, said, "After he [Dr. Tiller] was killed I helped organize the martyr guard at his funeral. We're trying to figure out how to go forward from here—to get a new provider and to protect the provider. This action today is a message to the right, but also to a provider, that we will defend him."

NOW conference discusses abortion, Afghanistan war

BY LAURA ANDERSON

INDIANAPOLIS—The 2009 National Organization for Women (NOW) conference took place here June 19–21. More than 300 women's rights supporters attended.

On the first day Kari Ann Rinker and four other Kansas NOW members talked about their experiences with ongoing attacks by antiabortion rightists in Wichita. The meeting came three weeks after vigils across the country protested the killing of Dr. George Tiller, an abortion provider in Wichita.

Rinker helped to organize dozens of participants in the defense guard at Tiller's funeral, which antiabortion rightists had threatened to disrupt. She spoke on a panel titled, "Through the Back Door: States Limit Women's Reproductive Rights."

The panel covered bills in various state legislatures that chip away at women's right to abortion. This includes fetal "personhood" legislation, which elevates fetal "rights" above those of women, and laws requiring a sonogram image of the fetus be made available to women before they have an abortion.

Among those who were attending their first national NOW conference was Jessica Lowe, 26, who helped lead a successful union-organizing drive for graduate assistants at Florida State University in April.

In the workshop titled, "Islamic Fundamentalism and Its Attacks on Women's Rights," Eleanor Smeal, president of Feminist Majority, endorsed the continuation of U.S. intervention in Afghanistan, calling on the Obama administration to implement a new "Marshall Plan" in that country. To justify her prowar position she pointed to the hundreds of girls' schools in Afghanistan that have been attacked by Islamist forces.

Responding in the discussion, Betsy Farley, a NOW member from Chicago and the Socialist Workers Party candidate in the April special congressional election there, said, "How can you expect the U.S. government, which under the Obama administration has escalated the war in Afghanistan, to send economic aid that will help women or workers and farmers in that country? We need to demand immediate and unconditional withdrawal of all imperialist troops from Afghanistan, Iraq, and Pakistan."

The conference passed a resolution supporting ongoing clinic defense training. Another resolution adopted called for ending the shackling of women prisoners who are pregnant or are in pre- or post-childbirth stages. This resolution was put forward by Tina Reynolds, one of three former women prisoners who described the draconian conditions facing women behind bars, the fastest growing segment of the prison population.

The conference elected Terry O'Neill NOW president and Bonnie Grabenhofer executive vice president.

MILITANT LABOR FORUMS

CALIFORNIA

San Francisco

The Cosmopolitan 'Meritocracy' and the Class Stratification of the Black Nationality. Speaker: Andrea Morell, Socialist Workers Party. Fri., July 10, 7:30 p.m. *5482 Mission St. Tel: (415) 584-2135.*

NEW ZEALAND

Auckland

Elections and Protests in Iran: The Working Class and the Fight for Democratic Rights. Speaker: Annalucia Vermunt, Communist League. Fri., July 10, 7 p.m. *Suite 3, 7 Mason Ave., Otahuhu. Upstairs, above Laundromat. Tel: (09) 276-8885.*

Toronto meeting discusses Cuban Revolution today

BY JOHN STEELE

TORONTO—A panel presentation here June 6 of Pathfinder's *Our History Is Still Being Written: The Story of Three Chinese-Cuban Generals in the Cuban Revolution* promoted the recently published Chinese edition of the book.

The meeting was held at the Agincourt Community Centre, in Scarborough, part of the Toronto metropolitan area, and home to hundreds of thousands of immigrants from China.

With some 40 people attending, the meeting helped lay the groundwork for inviting Armando Choy, one of the Chinese Cuban generals interviewed in the book, to speak in several Canadian cities.

The book tells the story of Choy, Gustavo Chui, and Moisés Sío Wong. As young men they participated in Cuba's revolutionary war to overthrow the U.S.-backed dictatorship of Fulgencio Batista, opening the road to the first socialist revolution in the Americas. Today they shoulder major responsibilities in the leadership of the revolution.

On the panel were Jorge Soberón, Consul General of the Cuban Consulate in Toronto; Lorrie Wang, of the Chinese Canadian National Council (CCNC) Toronto chapter; Dick Chan, a founding CCNC member; and Mary-Alice Waters, editor of *Our History Is Still Being Written* and president of Pathfinder Press.

Karen Sun, CCNC Toronto executive director, opened the meeting noting that two years earlier when the book first appeared in English and Spanish Choy, who had been scheduled to tour Canada, was unable to come. She urged those attending to help organize his coming visit.

"It's amazing to realize that when Cuba was fighting for its liberation from Spain in the 1860s, there were Chinese involved in the struggle," Soberón stated, referring to the sections of the book describing the important role Chinese who had been brought to Cuba as indentured laborers played in Cuba's independence struggle.

Using a slide show, Chan detailed the struggle of Chinese immigrants in Canada against the racist policies of the Canadian government, from the time Chinese immigrant workers built the trans-Canada railroad in the 19th century to today. "Until recently these Chinese railroad workers were forgotten pioneers," he said. Likewise, "this book brings forward the little-known history of Chinese in Cuba."

In her remarks Wang said she knew little about the Cuban Revolution before reading *Our History is Still Being Written*. "The Chinese Cubans liberated themselves by fighting for all the oppressed people of Cuba," she said. As a result "Chinese Cubans participated actively in the socialist revolution and were themselves the beneficiaries of the 1959 victory."

An alternative to capitalist society

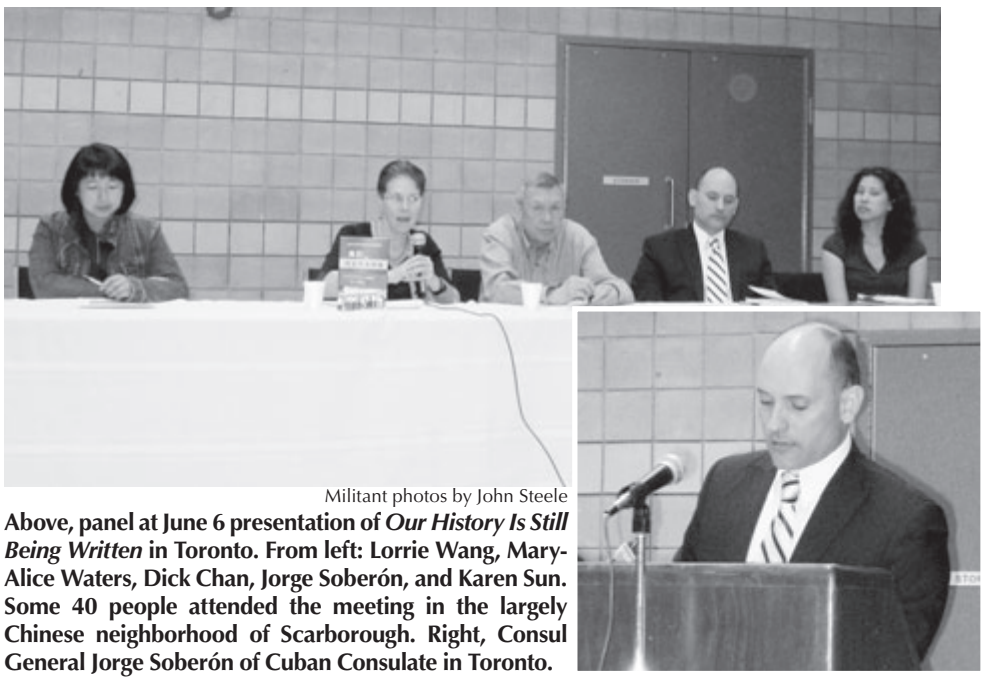
Waters described the keen interest with which the three generals have followed meetings such as the one in Scarborough. "Today we are living through the first tremors of what will be decades of deepening economic, social, and political crises of the capitalist system," she noted. "And this book brings the Cuban Revolution alive for people who are looking for a revolutionary answer to the inevitable course and consequences of capitalism."

Waters explained that as young men the three generals along with millions of others didn't start out to make a socialist revolution, but in taking steps that aided Cuban workers and farmers, they came into a head-on confrontation with the wealthy families in the United States that owned much of Cuba's land and industries.

"The Cuban people simply did not back down," continued Waters. "That is the explanation for everything that has happened up to today—the 50-year effort by Washington to make the Cuban people pay for what they accomplished. "That is why five Cuban revolutionaries are in U.S. prisons today," she added. (See articles on pages 8 and 10.)

Waters cited a passage of *Our History Is Still Being Written* in which Sío Wong answers a question put to him by a visiting Chinese scholar: how was it possible, unlike anywhere else in the Americas, for a person of Chinese descent like himself to carry such major responsibilities in Cuba? "Sío Wong answered him: 'because here we made a socialist revolution,'" said Waters, a revolution that eliminated capitalist property relations.

The young Chinese translator of the Chinese-language edition, Waters noted, makes this same point in the afterword to the book.



Militant photos by John Steele

Above, panel at June 6 presentation of *Our History Is Still Being Written* in Toronto. From left: Lorrie Wang, Mary-Alice Waters, Dick Chan, Jorge Soberón, and Karen Sun. Some 40 people attended the meeting in the largely Chinese neighborhood of Scarborough. Right, Consul General Jorge Soberón of Cuban Consulate in Toronto.

"Knowing the discrimination Chinese living outside of China face he couldn't believe that a person of Chinese ancestry was an aide to Raúl Castro and a general in the Cuban army. A friend of his sent him the book when he was living and studying in New Zealand and he decided to translate it to make the history of Chinese in Cuba known to other Chinese like himself," Waters stated.

Wide-ranging discussion

A wide-range of questions and comments were raised from the floor in the discussion that followed the panel presentations.

In response to a question on the importance of the international campaign to win freedom for the Cuban Five, Soberón summarized the decades-long series of terrorist and other attacks by right-wing Cubans operating out of Miami with the complicity of the U.S. government.

"The jail sentences given to the Cuban Five are unprecedented," said Waters, noting that the measures taken against them violated the democratic and constitutional rights of all those living in the United States and "were an attack on working people as a whole. The struggle to free the Cuban Five is crucial for us all."

Both the Chinese-language Fairchild radio news network and the Omni 2 television station, which broadcasts programs in many different languages, sent reporters to the meeting. Two mandarin-language newscasts on Omni 2 television featured a report on the event, including an interview with Waters and shots of the Chinese-language book cover along with the Pathfinder Press Web site from which the book can be ordered.

Honduran president ousted in military coup

Continued from front page

ally. The Honduran Supreme Court also ratified the coup.

So far no government has recognized the new regime.

The military has been unable to quell protests against the coup despite imposing an evening curfew and cutting off electricity to much of Tegucigalpa, the capital.

Three thousand protesters blocked entrances to the Presidential Palace June 29 but were dispersed by soldiers and police who fired rubber bullets and pepper spray. Among the demonstrators were many laborers, taxi drivers, peasants, and indigenous people, according to the Associated Press. There have also been protests against the coup in other parts of the country.

Supporters of the coup demonstrated June 30 in Tegucigalpa and San Pedro Sula.

President Barack Obama said he was "deeply concerned." High-ranking U.S. officials denied charges that Washington had encouraged the coup. A senior Obama administration official said that Washington had been in close contact with Honduran government and military officials opposed to Zelaya, but that the Honduran military broke off discussions shortly before the coup.

Washington has a long-standing relationship with the Honduran military. There are currently 600 U.S. troops stationed at a Honduran air base about 50 miles northwest of Tegucigalpa.

U.S. corporate giants Chiquita and Dole control a large part of the country's agricultural export market.

Zelaya, a wealthy rancher, became president in January 2006. He was a long-time politician in the Liberal Party, one of the main bourgeois parties in Honduras. He campaigned around the slogan "Change is needed" and promised that if he won, he and his ministers would take the bus to work.

Measures upset bosses

In October 2007 Zelaya visited Cuba, the first official visit there by a Honduran president in 46 years.

In August 2008 he led Honduras to join the Bolivarian Alternative for the Americas, an economic alliance spearheaded by Venezuelan president Hugo Chávez that seeks to counter U.S. economic power in the region and in particular trade agreements favoring Washington.

One measure that particularly upset business owners was a 60 percent increase in the minimum wage early this year.

In March Zelaya called for a referendum asking voters to back convening an assembly to write a new constitution, including changes that would allow him to run for a second term.

Zelaya fired Gen. Romeo Vasquez Velasquez, the head of the military June 24 when he refused to ensure the referendum would take place. The Supreme Court then overturned the firing.

On June 26 Zelaya led thousands of supporters to an air force base where ballots for the referendum were being held, taking them to the presidential palace for safekeeping.

As the coup was under way, Patricia Rodas, the Honduran minister of foreign relations, asked the Venezuelan, Nicaraguan, and Cuban embassies for diplomatic protection. After the ambassadors arrived at her home, a dozen or more masked soldiers burst in. All three ambassadors grabbed hold of Rodas to prevent them from carrying her off. The goons succeeded in pulling off the Nicaraguan and Venezuelan ambassadors. But they couldn't loosen the hold of Cuban ambassador Juan Carlos Hernández.

The soldiers threw Rodas and Hernández into a van and headed to the air force base where they finally managed to pull the two apart. Rodas was later put on a plane to Mexico. Some workers helped Hernández get back to the Cuban embassy after he had been dumped along a roadside.

Cuba condemns coup

Cuban president Raúl Castro strongly condemned the coup. Now is the moment "to unmask those who condemn, but afterwards are applauding under the table, like has happened so many times in our history," he said, in a clear reference to Washington. "There can be no negotiations with the coup leaders, nor any conditions or demands of any type placed on the legitimate government of President Zelaya."

On June 30 Zelaya spoke before the UN General Assembly in New York. The assembly approved by acclamation a resolution calling for the restoration of Zelaya. The resolution was sponsored by the governments of Bolivia, Cuba, Ecuador, Venezuela, Mexico, the United States, and others.

After the UN vote, Zelaya announced that he will return to Honduras July 4 to finish the remaining six months of his presidential term.

Australian gov't projects big expansion of military

BY BOB AIKEN

SYDNEY—The Australian government has projected its biggest military expansion since World War II, according to a "Defence White Paper" released in May. "In a period of global instability," Prime Minister Kevin Rudd declared, "Australia must invest in a strong, capable, and well resourced" military.

A close alliance with U.S. imperialism, and deepening "interoperability" with Washington's armed forces, remains—as it has been for decades—the bipartisan course of Australia's capitalist rulers. The Rudd government recently announced the deployment of an additional 450 troops to Afghanistan, where 1,100 Australian troops are already fighting as part of the US-led imperialist alliance.

The Australian military plans to build 12 new submarines, doubling the size of its fleet, along with three destroyers and eight frigates and to buy 24 antisubmarine helicopters. The new, larger ships and submarines will be equipped with cruise missiles for the first time.

Other extensive purchases include 1,100 new armored personnel carriers for the army and special forces units and 100 F-35 Lightning II Joint Strike Fighters for the air force.

A report in the *Australian* states that the buildup will enable the Royal Australian Navy to "deploy up to seven boats to protect Australia's northern approaches, including key maritime straits running through the Indonesian archipelago, at times of high threat."

"The biggest changes to our outlook," defense minister Joel Fitzgibbon wrote in a preface to the White Paper, "have been the rise of China, the emergence of India and the beginning of the end of the . . . almost two-decade-long period in which the preeminence of our principal ally, the United States, was without question."

While "the U.S. will remain dominant over the next 20-year period," he said, "there will be a number of other superpowers floating around." U.S. secretary of state Hillary Clinton retorted, "the United States is not ceding the Pacific to anyone."

Chinese foreign ministry spokesman Ma Zhong Xu told the *Australian* in response to questions about the White Paper that "China is a peaceful force that forms no threat to any other countries."

A central focus of the "defense review" is the "stability and security" of the South Pacific, where the Australian government seated in Canberra views itself as the preeminent power. Together with the New Zealand government, its imperialist ally in the region, Canberra has led a number of interventions in the area in recent years.

Australian and New Zealand troops, cops, and government officials have been deployed in the Solomon Islands since 2003. The two powers dispatched troops to Tonga in 2006 to help quell antigovernment protests on that island. They have also intervened in East Timor several times since 1999.

The White Paper makes it clear that Canberra expects to engage in further "peace-keeping operations" in the region in the coming period.

At the center of its intervention in the South Pacific today is a campaign of deepening economic and diplomatic pressure on the government of Commodore Voreqe Bainimarama, who seized power in Fiji in December 2006. Posing as the champions of "restoring democracy," the Australian and New Zealand rulers are pressing Bainimarama to call elections.

Both the Australian and New Zealand rulers are concerned at China's increased influence in the region. In the year following the 2006 coup in Fiji, Chinese aid pledges to that country increased from about US$23 million to $161 million. Australian grants to Fiji this year are $21 million.

Australia Department of Defence/Tpr. Michael Franchi

Australian soldiers practice urban operations drills in Rockhampton in Queensland, Australia. Government officials say they seek to enforce "stability and security" in South Pacific.

Iranian rulers clamp down on demonstrations

Continued from front page

test demonstrations that erupted after the government announced President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad had been reelected. The Guardian Council, a group of clerics and lawyers who supervise elections and vet new laws, certified Ahmadinejad's reelection June 29 and will swear him in by early August. In a June 22 statement, the Pasdaran, the country's main military power, threatened "decisive and revolutionary confrontations" with those still taking to the streets in protest actions.

Ahmadinejad was declared the winner of the presidential election with 63 percent of the vote to 34 percent for Mir Hossein Mousavi, the former prime minister of Iran in the 1980s. Mousavi, who has not been seen publicly since June 18, has challenged the results and demanded a new vote.

The protests highlight the erosion of the 30-year control of the government by wealthy clerics, who consolidated capitalist rule to halt the advance of the workers and peasants after the February 1979 revolution overthrew the shah, a firm U.S. ally. Political space is opening up today for working people, women, and oppressed nationalities to press their demands.

The election also shows the deepening divisions within the Iranian capitalist class over how to best advance its interests in the face of imperialist pressures and the impact of the world capitalist economic crisis.

Ayatollah Khamenei was a commander of the Pasdaran before becoming president and then supreme leader. Ahmadinejad served with the Pasdaran during the eight-year war in the 1980s to repulse an imperialist-backed attack by the Iraqi government against the Iranian revolution.

During that war, the Iranian regime sacrificed the lives of a generation of youth who were sent to clear Iraqi minefields by walking across them. One million Iranian workers and peasants were killed during the war, which the clerics took advantage of to consolidate their control over the capitalist government.

The Pasdaran have since branched out into lucrative economic investments, securing government contracts in agriculture and oil sectors, construction, and in automobile manufacturing. With the election of Ahmadinejad to the presidency in 2005, they began occupying leading cabinet and ambassadorial positions in his administration. Today, more than one-third of Iran's parliament consists of Pasdaran members.

Women have been playing a prominent role in the protests and have been participating alongside men fighting cop assaults. Despite Khamenei's cease-and-desist order, thousands of protesters took to the streets June 20 in Tehran, the capital, standing up to police armed with batons, tear gas, and water cannon. Iranian Press TV reported 457 people were arrested. Government reports say 20 have been killed since the protests began. Demonstrators who had been beaten and injured were arrested and detained when they sought medical treatment in hospitals, reported the International Campaign for Human Rights in Iran.

Some took to their rooftops in Tehran chanting "*Allahu Akbar*" (God is great) in defiance of the police attacks.

Students rallied that day outside the capital at a university in the southern city of Shiraz. A video on the Internet shows women fighting police baton attacks.

In another development, the British government announced June 18 that $1.64 billion of Iranian assets are frozen in the United Kingdom as part of United Nations sanctions aimed at halting Tehran's nuclear program. In a speech at Friday prayers June 19 Khamenei singled out the British government as "the most evil" of Iran's enemies. Soon after, London and Tehran both expelled two of each other's diplomats.

After initially saying he had "deep concern" about the post election violence, President Barack Obama said June 23 that he was "appalled and outraged" at the response of the Iranian government to the protests. With legislators calling for tougher sanctions against Iran, the House of Representatives voted 405-1 for a nonbinding resolution denouncing the crackdown. The Senate unanimously passed a similar resolution.

25, 50, AND 75 YEARS AGO

THE MILITANT
A SOCIALIST NEWSWEEKLY PUBLISHED IN THE INTERESTS OF WORKING PEOPLE

July 13, 1984

LONDON—More than 30,000 people marched and rallied here June 27 in a regional "Day of Action" in support of striking coal miners. It was the fifth and largest day of action called by the miners and the labor movement since the strike began 16 weeks ago.

The midafternoon day of action was called by the Southeast region of the Trades Union Congress (Britain's equivalent to the AFL-CIO) and the Kent National Union of Mineworkers (NUM).

The miners are on strike against the government's proposal to close 20 mines and fire 20,000 workers over the next year. The coal industry here is government owned.

THE MILITANT
PUBLISHED WEEKLY IN THE INTERESTS OF THE WORKING PEOPLE

July 13, 1959

The Socialist Workers Party concluded its Eighteenth National Convention last week after three days of intensive work in an atmosphere charged with self-confident realism and revolutionary socialist optimism. The participation of some 250 delegates and visitors from every branch in the country marked a high point for the party since the 1946 Chicago Convention on the eve of the cold-war and witch-hunt period.

Among the delegates was a large representation of youth along with founders of the American communist movement, veterans of the trade union movement, and front-line fighters in the Negro struggle.

THE MILITANT
Weekly Organ of the Communist League of America

July 14, 1934

The leading capitalist nations are now entering a period of intensified trade wars that shift in emphasis and political expression almost every week. The ramification of the struggle for markets is so great that it is difficult to follow the battle line on all fronts. But what can be pointed out is the general trends and the main antagonisms.

This struggle for markets by the imperialist powers finds its political expression in clashes between imperialist powers and in open class war within the countries or industries of the nations which cannot find outlets and markets for overproduction and capital investments.

Working class and the fight to transform education

Printed below is an excerpt from The Working Class and the Transformation of Learning: The Fraud of Education Reform under Capitalism *by Jack Barnes, one of Pathfinder's Books of the Month for July. This booklet approaches education from a working-class point of view—as a social question—pointing to the fight for the transformation of learning into a universal and lifetime activity. It presents education as part of preparing workers and farmers, Barnes explains, "for the greatest of all battles in the years ahead—the battle to throw off the self-image the rulers teach us, and to recognize that we are capable of taking power and organizing society, as we collectively educate ourselves and learn the exploiters in the process."* *Copyright © 2000 by Pathfinder Press. Reprinted by permission.*

Militant/Naomi Craine

Teachers and their supporters rally against education cutbacks May 26 in Los Angeles. "It is not true that the capitalist class needs for workers to be educated," states Barnes. "They need for us to lose any desire over time to broaden our scope and become citizens of the world."

BOOKS OF THE MONTH

BY JACK BARNES

Capitalist society promotes the myth that education is a youth question. But any society that sees education as a question just for young people can never have education that is meaningful for human beings, including youth. Social solidarity will never exist in such a society.

The working class cannot begin with how to change things so that *youth* get a better education. We have to begin with how to transform the values of society, not just the economics; it cannot be reduced simply to an economic problem. To be meaningful, education has to create the possibilities for society as a whole to advance, instead of reinforcing the exploitation of the majority by the few. Until then, the only "liberal education" available to any fighter who wants one is political education within the workers movement.

What is taught in most schools today is largely worthless. There are a handful of skills that provide some preparation for life—learning to read, learning to write, learning to compute, practicing to increase our attention spans, learning the discipline necessary to study and use our minds. Reading and studying are extremely hard. It takes discipline to sit still for three hours, two hours, even one hour—not moving, not jumping up—and to work through ideas. Working through ideas is hard; we all have to learn how to do it. But it is part of taking ourselves seriously. It is part of taking humanity seriously. We have to learn how to read and study by coming to better understand how other people live and work, whether they are older or younger than we are.

But most everything else we are taught in school, especially in the so-called social sciences and related "disciplines," are things we need to unlearn. Civics courses, social studies courses—these are all obfuscation. There is technical training of certain kinds, and applied sciences, that can be OK, with some luck. But these are forms of apprenticeships, not liberal education in the meaningful, universal sense.

Many young people wonder why they should go to school for twelve years in this society. Most never learn anything of value past the sixth or seventh grade. I went to working-class public schools in southern Ohio in the 1940s and 1950s. I never had to write a single essay or do anything like that my entire time in school; I was never given a reason to concentrate on doing so. But I had some teachers who were fine people and who taught me to read, taught me grammar and spelling, showed me by example how to at least sit quietly and work for a while, and encouraged me to do so. They displayed some social solidarity. That is all I can say I ever got from going to school. But that part turned out to be valuable. It was a lucky accident. But because of this accident, I learned to read, acquired the habit of reading, and acquired it for *life*. At the same time, I hated reading what they crammed down my throat in high school. I hated Shakespeare then; I hated *Macbeth* the way it was taught.

Most young people never get taught they have anything to look forward to after their compulsory schooling is over. They never get taught in such a way as to make them believe the educational system is based on the assumption that their lives are worth a damn. (Many of us can remember teachers and principals who reeked of this attitude, I'm sure.) Instead, young people learn they have nothing to look forward to. They do not need to be told this in so many words; all they have to do is just watch other workers older than themselves. They just watch people like themselves who are above seventeen or eighteen years of age. Between ages six and seventeen young workers go to school six or seven hours a day; they are supposed to read books, work for good grades, study things, turn in homework. Then, all of a sudden they turn eighteen and they never do it again. First they are supposed to "just say no" to anything that is fun. Then they are supposed to just say *yes* to anything an employer demands.

Don't underestimate young people's moral yearnings, their openness, human solidarity, and sensitivity. Perhaps they cannot put what they see into words. Perhaps they cannot theorize it. But they *know* a lot about what's going on. What does this kind of education have to do with the human race?

To really discuss education is not to discuss how to reform the seventh grade in Canarsie. The seventh grade in Canarsie *is not going to be reformed*. Or in Louisville. Or anywhere else. I guarantee it, because the rulers have no need, and thus no desire, for workers to be educated in this society. It is not true that the capitalist class needs for workers to be educated; it is a lie. They need for us to be obedient, not to be educated. They need for us to have to work hard to make a living, not to be critical. They need for us to consume all we make each week buying their products. Above all, they need for us to lose any desire over time to broaden our scope and become citizens of the world.

But the employing class does not need for us to be disciplined. In fact, indiscipline in life puts us more in their grasp. Obedience on the job, yes; discipline in life, no. That is what the employers want from the working class.

July BOOKS OF THE MONTH

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UN hearing condemns U.S. rule in Puerto Rico

BY TOM BAUMANN

UNITED NATIONS—Two dozen fighters for the independence of Puerto Rico testified June 15 at this year's decolonization hearings. They condemned Puerto Rico's status as one of the last remaining colonies in the world and made a strong case for that Latin American nation's right to be independent from U.S. rule.

Opening the session, Cuban ambassador Abelardo Moreno presented a draft resolution on behalf of Cuba, Ecuador, and Venezuela that reaffirmed the "inalienable right of the Puerto Rican people to self-determination and independence."

The resolution also called on U.S. president Barack Obama to release Oscar López, Carlos Alberto Torres, and Avelino González, locked up in U.S. prisons for fighting for the independence of Puerto Rico. The first two, convicted on "seditious conspiracy" charges, have been jailed for more than 28 years. González, arrested last year, awaits trial.

The UN Special Committee on Decolonization, which has adopted similar resolutions for the past 27 years, heard testimony from 32 petitioners, who overwhelmingly testified in favor of independence. These included representatives of the Puerto Rican Independence Party (PIP), Lawyers Guild of Puerto Rico, Hostos National Pro-Independence Movement (MINH), and Hostos Grand Jury Resistance Campaign. They called on the UN General Assembly to take up the status of Puerto Rico, which Washington claims is not a colony and not UN business.

Wilma Reverón of the Puerto Rico Committee at the United Nations condemned the fact that "the colonial administration has laid off 10,000 workers and has announced plans to lay off up to 30,000 more—all this to satisfy the demands of the bondholders on Wall Street."

Edgardo Román Espada of the Puerto Rican Coalition Against the Death Penalty explained that while Puerto Rico's constitution bars capital punishment, U.S. authorities affirm the right to impose it. Today five cases are pending in the U.S. court in Puerto Rico in which the death penalty could be imposed. He noted that the court conducts cases in English, although Puerto Ricans' native tongue is Spanish.

Juan González, son of Avelino González, noted that since being incarcerated without bail in February 2008, his father has developed a neurological condition and has not received adequate treatment.

Since invading Puerto Rico in 1898 Washington has maintained a colonial regime there, González said, and the people of Puerto Rico "will continue struggling, with words and actions, against the imperialist attacks to achieve a final end to what is our right: our independence."

Jan Susler, on behalf of the National Lawyers Guild International Committee, called on Washington to "quash the grand jury subpoenas and desist from using the grand jury as a tool of repression." The U.S. government has used federal grand juries to harass and jail independence fighters

Continued on page 10

Angélica Acosta

Juan González testifies before UN Special Committee on Decolonization June 15 hearing on Puerto Rico. González is son of Avelino González, one of political prisoners locked up in U.S. jails for fighting for Puerto Rican independence.

SWP statement: Independence for Puerto Rico!

The following statement was presented on behalf of the Socialist Workers Party by Sam Manuel at a June 15 United Nations Special Committee on Decolonization hearing on Puerto Rico. Subheads are by the Militant.

Distinguished chairman and honored committee members:

Last week tens of thousands of unionists and students in Puerto Rico, Washington's largest colony, took to the streets demanding an end to the government's plans to lay off 30,000 government workers. The Socialist Workers Party extends a hand of solidarity to these fellow fighters. These actions set an example for working people around the world—indeed, here in the United States—on the need to fight back as workers and farmers face an ever-deepening crisis of the world capitalist system, the deepest since the early decades of the 20th century.

Today Puerto Rico's official unemployment rate stands at nearly 15 percent—that's 50 percent higher than in the United States—and those figures are understated. The layoffs will be all the more devastating since one-fifth of Puerto Rico's workforce is employed by the government.

Under the new "fiscal emergency" law, Gov. Luis Fortuño's administration will freeze wages and essentially tear up union contracts of public employees. While Fortuño claims these attacks are necessary because of the "budget deficit," 27 percent of the island's revenue goes to pay interest to U.S. and other bondholders and bankers.

Imperialist investors have demanded sharp assaults on what they call Puerto Rico's "welfare state"—federal payments such as food stamps and housing subsidies, which Washington has relied on for decades to cushion the effects of superexploitation. They complain that Puerto Rico has become less "competitive" as a source of profits than Ireland, South Korea, and other semicolonial countries.

This reality underscores the fact that the people of Puerto Rico and workers and farmers in the United States share a common enemy—the U.S. billionaire families and their government in Washington. And we share a common struggle to get that enemy off our backs.

For these reasons, a successful fight for Puerto Rico's independence is in the interests, not only of the people of that Latin American nation, but of the vast majority of the people of the United States. As long as the U.S. rulers control Puerto Rico's destiny, they will be strengthened, while the fighting capacity and solidarity of working people in both countries will be weakened.

In the United States, the auto bosses are cutting wages and laying off tens of thousands of workers, while jeopardizing their health benefits. Thousands of teachers, health-care, and transportation workers, from California to New York, are facing the axe. Workers dependent on Social Security in their retirement years are seeing it slashed. Farmers face declining prices for their crops that don't even cover their costs of production. Puerto Ricans living in the United States, who face widespread discrimination, are among those who bear the brunt of these attacks.

Free Puerto Rican political prisoners

I join with fellow independence fighters in demanding the release of all Puerto Rican political prisoners, who are serving draconian sentences in U.S. jails for the "crime" of fighting for the independence and dignity of their country. Carlos Alberto Torres and Haydée Beltrán have been locked up for 29 years, and Oscar López for 28—some of the longest-held political prisoners in the world. Avelino González has been jailed for more than a year now without bail. Free them now!

These attacks are a part of the imperialist rulers' broader war on working people and the oppressed around the world—from Afghanistan, to Pakistan, Iraq, North Korea, the Philippines, and elsewhere. The people of Puerto Rico and the world over face decades of imperialist wars and economic crisis as the United States and other capitalist powers compete to restore their profit rates.

The U.S. rulers know these conditions will generate working-class resistance, which we see examples of today, from the strike by Stella D'oro bakery workers here in New York to the millions fighting for the legalization of all undocumented workers. That is why Washington is pushing through measures to weaken our political rights and ability to organize.

One example is the Obama administration's announcement that it plans to use military trials against some prisoners currently locked up at the Guantánamo base, using secret evidence and other violations of basic rights.

The U.S. government has also trampled on constitutional rights in other recent frame-ups based on "conspiracy" charges: five immigrant workers given long sentences in the Ft. Dix, New Jersey, case; six men from the African American neighborhood of Liberty City, Miami; and recently four in New York City charged with a bomb plot. In each of these cases, FBI provocateurs played a central part in hatching these "plots."

Release Cuban Five

We also call on the U.S. government to release Gerardo Hernández, Ramón Labañino, Fernando González, René González, and Antonio Guerrero. These five Cuban revolutionaries have been unjustly held in U.S. prisons for more than a decade, serving sentences of up to life in prison on false "conspiracy" charges. Their only crime was to defend Cuba by monitoring the actions of violent U.S.-based counterrevolutionary groups. Today the Cuban Five, from behind prison bars, continue in the front ranks of the U.S. class struggle.

One of the many "transgressions" of the Cuban Revolution, in the eyes of the U.S. imperialist rulers, is its unwavering defense of Puerto Rico's right to independence. The refusal of Cuban workers and farmers to bow to Washington's dictates—despite a half-century-long U.S. economic war and other assaults—is a powerful example and inspiration to all those fighting for freedom. It shatters the lie so often repeated by the U.S. colonial masters that the people of Puerto Rico, and oppressed people in general, cannot survive without Washington's guiding hand.

Cuba's socialist revolution shows that, when workers and farmers take state power out of the hands of the capitalist minority, it is possible to win genuine independence. Cuba offers an example for working people worldwide, including right here in the United States.

This committee's condemnation of U.S. colonial rule over Puerto Rico will serve the interests of the overwhelming majority of the people of the United States and of those everywhere who fight for self-determination and against oppression.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman and members of this committee, for the opportunity to present these views before you today.

For further reading...

Puerto Rico: Independence Is a Necessity
by Rafael Cancel Miranda
Also available in Spanish.
$6

Cuba and the Coming American Revolution
by Jack Barnes
Also available in Spanish, French. $10

Available online or at a distributor listed on page 6.

www.pathfinderpress.com

‘Courage and discipline’: traits of revolutionaries

Conference prepares socialists to act on political opportunities, build movement

Militant photos by Ben Joyce (above) and Eric Simpson (inset)

Jack Barnes, inset, presents political report to Socialist Education and Active Workers Conference June 19. Events like the killing of Dr. George Tiller in Wichita, Kansas, are a test for proletarian revolutionaries, Barnes said. Communists react to such assaults by asking, “What is to be done?” not “What is to be afraid of?”

BY CINDY JAQUITH

OBERLIN, Ohio—Some 375 workers and youth gathered here June 18–20 at the 2009 Socialist Education and Active Workers Conference.

Some participants had just visited Latvia on a *Militant* reporting trip to learn about workers’ response to the slashing of government employee wages by 20 percent and pensions by 10 percent. Others had recently returned from Iran, where they participated in the Tehran International Book Fair.

Many had been part of vigils in the United States following the May 31 killing of Dr. George Tiller by an antiabortion rightist. Tiller operated an abortion clinic in Wichita, Kansas. Still others had just come from picket lines protesting the U.S. Supreme Court’s June 15 refusal to hear the appeal of five Cuban revolutionaries, known internationally as the Cuban Five, who have been held in U.S. jails on frame-up charges for nearly 11 years.

The Socialist Workers Party and the Young Socialists sponsored the three-day meeting. Participants came from the United States, Australia, Canada, France, Iceland, New Zealand, Sweden, and the United Kingdom.

Students and Cuban Revolution

SWP National Committee member Mary-Alice Waters presented the first political report, titled “The Cuban Revolution, Communism, and the Socialist Workers Party.”

Introducing the Cuban Revolution to young people on college campuses is one of the best ways to win them to the communist movement, Waters said. This fall Armando Choy, one of the generals interviewed in the book *Our History Is Still Being Written: The Story of Three Chinese-Cuban Generals in the Cuban Revolution*, will conduct a speaking tour of universities in Canada, she announced.

Waters reported on the importance of building the international conference on Cuban independence fighter José Martí, U.S. president Abraham Lincoln, and Mexican president Benito Juárez, scheduled for October 15–17 in Monterrey, Mexico.

The SWP and YS are actively helping to build participation in the Monterrey gathering. To strengthen their ability to politically explain the conference to students and academics, many took advantage of classes here on “José Martí: The Class Struggle in the United States After the Defeat of Radical Reconstruction and the Fight for Cuban Independence”; “Benito Juárez and the Bourgeois Democratic Revolution in Mexico: The Fight for Independence and the U.S. Civil War”; and “Abraham Lincoln: The Revolutionary War to Abolish Slavery and the Defeat of the European Colonial Powers in Mexico.”

A class on “The Frame-up and Imprisonment of the Cuban Five: An Assault on the Rights of U.S. Workers” also took place. Classes were given on the Pathfinder Press books *Is Socialist Revolution in the U.S. Possible?* and *Capitalism and the Transformation of Africa*.

The day after the conference the YS held a meeting here focused on stepping up political work on campuses, particularly around the Cuban Revolution. A priority will be helping sponsor talks at universities and colleges where students can learn about the difference it has made for workers and farmers in Cuba to take political power and use it to advance the interests of the vast majority.

The YS will also step up its work on campuses to defend the Cuban Five and to promote the Monterrey conference. Four young people at the conference decided to join the YS.

Defense of abortion rights

In her report, Waters pointed to the political challenges confronting Cuba’s revolutionary government in face of the worst capitalist economic crisis since the 1930s. Much progress had been made in overcoming the severe shortages in Cuba in the early 1990s, she said, but three devastating hurricanes over the last year have taken their toll.

The absence of revolutions in other countries poses the challenge of politicizing and mobilizing Cuban youth who neither took part in battles that won the 1959 revolution nor have had an opportunity to see other socialist revolutions around the world.

In her report Waters also addressed the importance of the fight to defend the right to abortion, which remains the cutting edge and the precondition for women’s liberation. She underscored the degree to which this right has been pushed back because of the lack of a fighting women’s movement. In the absence of such a movement, many women today who support abortion rights are afraid to use the word “abortion” openly.

The killing of Tiller is a reflection of the sharpening class struggle in the United States, said SWP national secretary Jack Barnes in his report to the conference. Events like this are a test for proletarian revolutionaries. Communists react to such assaults by asking, “What is to be done?” not “What is to be afraid of?”

“Courage and discipline,” Barnes said, are the two most important characteristics of a revolutionary. He pointed to the role that engaging in combat to

Continued on page 9

Education, skills training feature of conference

BY BEN JOYCE

OBERLIN, Ohio—In addition to attending a wide range of classes, many of those attending the June 18–20 Socialist Education and Active Workers Conference participated in workshops aimed at increasing the skills needed by communist workers to get and hold jobs and carry out productive political work in a sharply contracting capitalist economic crisis. This challenge was a feature of the main political talks at the conference, which was sponsored by the Socialist Workers Party and the Young Socialists.

The presentations also highlighted the importance of simultaneously carrying out systematic study of the political program and theory of the Marxist movement as it unfolded chronologically in world events as an inseparable part of strengthening of the movement. Carrying out these two aspects together will be central as the party moves forward.

In a report on the opening day of the conference, SWP National Committee member Norton Sandler explained that in the midst of a deep economic contraction and rising unemployment, having skills that the bosses depend on exploiting give politically active workers flexibility to get and hold jobs wherever opportunities in the class struggle present themselves. As workers respond to the bosses’ assault on their standard of living, being able to get to the heart of these struggles as they unfold will be crucial.

Garment and meatpacking workers attending the conference organized workshops on the skills needed in their respective industries. In the meatpacking workshop, workers from the United States, United Kingdom, and New Zealand spoke about their experiences in building fractions of communist workers in this industry and how sharpening their skills has made this possible. Participants then broke up into groups where they learned to properly sharpen a knife and got hands-on practice with different cuts of meat.

Militant/Jorge Lertora

Amanda Ulman works with Omari Musa in sewing workshop.

At the garment workshop participants joined teams at sewing machines set up throughout the area to learn and practice skills needed in putting various parts of a garment together. The weekly sewing classes organized by the New York SWP headquarters branch were pointed to as an example to emulate. Participants there each learned how to make shirts and, as new operations were required on the job, these were practiced as well.

Militant/Jorge Lertora

John Hawkins boning a ham in meat-cutting class

In the main conference hall a prominent display was set up illustrating the accomplishments of the weekly education series hosted by the New York branch. The display summarized the study syllabus that has been used over the past few years, beginning with a series on the two volumes of *Revolutionary Continuity* by Farrell Dobbs, a leader of the SWP and of the Teamsters union strikes in Minneapolis in the 1930s. The two books trace the history of the working-class movement in the United States up through the birth of the communist movement and its evolution in its formative years.

The syllabus then continues chronologically and takes up questions before the communist movement as they come up in their unique context, giving class participants an opportunity to consider these historic questions as part of a living continuity.

Brian Williams contributed to this article.

Socialist conference extends support to Cuban Five

The following greetings were sent to Gerardo Hernández, Antonio Guerrero, Ramón Labañino, Fernando González, and René González, known internationally as the Cuban Five, by participants in the Socialist Education and Active Workers Conference held in Oberlin, Ohio, June 18–20. The Socialist Workers Party and Young Socialists sponsored the conference.

June 20, 2009

Dear Gerardo, Antonio, Ramón, Fernando, and René,

Warm revolutionary greetings from the nearly 400 workers, farmers, students, and others from across the United States and around the world who are today concluding a Socialist Education and Active Workers Conference here in Oberlin, Ohio, organized by the Socialist Workers Party and the Young Socialists.

We condemn the decision announced this week by the U.S. Supreme Court not even to hear the powerful legal arguments presented by your attorneys against the rulings in your case handed down by lower U.S. courts, including conflicting and ambiguous rulings on their own laws. The high court decision demonstrates once again the U.S. rulers' fear of the example set by the men and women who are the authors of the mighty work that is the Cuban Revolution. The rulers know that is what you represent. Yet as René's recent message put it, the enemy "will live every day of its life with the humiliation of not understanding" why it can never subdue you.

Militant/Jorge Lertora

Rachele Fruit, cochair of closing session, reads message from conference to Cuban Five.

Cuban Five from left to right: Ramón Labañino, sentenced to life plus 18 years; Fernando González, 19 years; Antonio Guerrero, life plus 10 years; Gerardo Hernández, two life sentences plus 15 years; René González, 15 years.

From your place on the front lines of the class struggle in the United States, you know well that the methods used to frame up and jail you are the same ones the U.S. rulers use day after day against working people the world over. Police wiretapping, denial of bail, expanded use of solitary confinement, denial of an impartial jury of our peers, conspiracy charges, secret "evidence," and denial of visitation rights for loved ones—these are the methods employed by the U.S. government and its cop agencies against the oppressed and exploited whether in Kabul or Baghdad, Victorville, California, or Florence, Colorado.

The battle you are waging is a battle not only to defend the Cuban Revolution, but to defend the basic constitutional rights of all working people who live within the borders of this country. It is a battle that will become even sharper as the gravediggers of their system have no choice but to resist the inevitably accelerating drive by the owners and their government to shift onto *our* backs the price for the implosion of *their* system, a crisis that has barely begun. In this process, the stakes for us all in fighting for your freedom will become clearer to ever growing numbers.

As Gerardo put it so well, "We place our hopes in no court." It is the "jury of millions throughout the world" who will have the last word. With that truth as our guide, we have better prepared ourselves at this conference to explain the facts of your case to the broadest numbers of workers, farmers, students, and all we are able to reach.

To you and the people of Cuba—the men and women who established the first free territory of the Americas and have defended it for fifty years—we say:

You can count on our commitment. We will fight 'til you are free.

Jack Barnes

On behalf of the participants in the Socialist Education and Active Workers Conference

Socialist conference prepares movement to act

Continued from page 8

defend abortion clinics in Buffalo, New York, in 1992 had in transforming young members of the communist movement.

Leading up to the conference, participants studied a chapter from a new Pathfinder book by Barnes, *Malcolm X, Black Liberation, and the Road to Workers Power,* which was serialized in the *Militant.* The chapter focuses on the "meritocracy," the middle-class social layer—sometimes referred to as the "cognitive elite"—that Barack Obama represents and that helped him win the U.S. presidency. This social layer is completely anti–working class; it fears that class and wants to control it, Barnes said.

The political significance of this social layer and the continuity of the Marxist movement on the fight against national oppression were discussed further in a class entitled, "The National Question and the Line of March to the Dictatorship of the Proletariat."

In his six months in office, Obama has shown just how much his administration will be a continuation of his predecessor George Bush, Barnes said.

In addition to the escalation of the war in Afghanistan and Pakistan, Washington is making progress in bringing the Reserve Officers' Training Corps (ROTC) back onto campuses in exchange for dropping its "Don't ask, don't tell" policy on homosexuals in the military.

Events in Iran

During the conference, Iran was the scene of demonstrations by students and others protesting the election results that returned President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad to office. While communists do not back either Ahmadinejad, or his main opponent in the election, former prime minister Mir Hossein Mousavi, they join with all those fighting for democratic rights and to open up political space in Iran, Barnes said.

Thirty-five books published by Pathfinder have been translated into Farsi, Iran's official language. Nearly 50,000 Pathfinder titles in Farsi have been sold in the last decade.

These accomplishments were highlighted by a display in the conference hall. A class on "Iran Today and Its Impact on Developments throughout the Middle East from Beirut to Tel Aviv to Baghdad to Kabul" also took place.

Militant/Eric Simpson

Jacob Perasso, SWP candidate for Atlanta city council president, speaks at class titled, "José Martí: The Class Struggle in the United States After the Defeat of Radical Reconstruction and the Fight for Cuban Independence."

In Latvia, Barnes said, the rulers are drastically slashing wages and pensions to increase the percentage of surplus value squeezed out of the working class. With all proportions guarded, this is also what is happening in the United States.

The U.S. economy is in a depression, not a recession, he said, with nearly 10 percent official unemployment now, which is really closer to 20 percent when all those who have stopped looking for work or are working only part-time are included.

At a rally concluding the conference, SWP leader Dave Prince reported that pledges of $190,000 had been made to the Capital Fund, which finances the movement's long-term publishing projects.

Jeff Powers, a leader of work of supporters of the communist movement, reported that they had produced 10 new books last year and 106 reprints. Among the next books to come off the press are *Malcolm X, Black Liberation, and the Road to Workers Power,* an Arabic edition of *Capitalism's Long Hot Winter Has Begun*, and a Swedish edition of *New International* number 14.

Militant/Arthur Hughes

Young socialists at Socialist Education and Active Workers Conference snatch up used books sold to youth and first-time participants at steep discount.

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Cuban 5: 'We continue to resist until there is justice'

Below are excerpts of statements by René González and Gerardo Hernández in response to the June 15 decision of the U.S. Supreme Court refusing to hear their appeal. González and Hernández along with Antonio Guerrero, Ramón Labañino, and Fernando González are Cuban revolutionaries who have been unjustly locked up in U.S. prisons for nearly 11 years. Arrested in 1998, they were framed up and convicted in a 2001 federal trial in Miami on charges of "conspiracy to commit espionage," not registering as foreign agents, and, in the case of Hernández, "conspiracy to commit murder." The five were gathering information on counterrevolutionary Cuban American outfits that have carried out violent attacks on Cuba from south Florida with the complicity of the U.S. government. Also included here is an excerpt from Hernandez's statement in September 2008 marking the 10th year of their imprisonment. The translation from the Spanish is by the Militant.

René González

Once again the judicial mask of the most hypocritical society that has ever existed falls, exposing the true face of U.S. imperialism and insulting the conscience of the world with a cynical message: Their own laws will not prevent them from securing the impunity of their own terrorists. . . .

We are five soldiers, proudly and consciously occupying our trench, who have decided to rise for something rather than to fall for nothing. We are a living mirror of the moral values of a people, in which the enemy, impotent and enraged, can see reflected its own lack of values, its spiritual poverty, its frail self-image, and all its evils. We are five Cuban revolutionaries whom the enemy will never subdue, an enemy that will live every day of its life with the humiliation of not understanding why.

For the peoples of the world, the shamelessness of this legal process is but the repetition of an old lesson: we confront an empire that will not stop before any crime if it believes it can get away with it. No ethical consideration or universal outcry will make it stop but the price imposed by resistance.

To the Cuban people, the real target of this act of vengeance, it becomes another reason to close ranks, to not believe in appearances, to always expect the worst from the aggressor, and to never cease in the building of a society where the hypocrisy, revanchism, indignity, deceit, and cowardice that have driven a trial like ours are far from being virtues, as they are in the neighboring empire.

That will be the only measure of justice worthy of all its victims.

Ever onward to victory!

Gerardo Hernández

Based on the experience we have had, I am not surprised by the Supreme Court's decision. I have no confidence in the U.S. justice system. There are no longer any doubts that our case has been, from the beginning, a political case, because not only did we have the necessary legal arguments for the Court to review it, but we have the growing international support as reflected in the Amicus briefs presented to the Court on our behalf. I repeat what I said a year ago, on June 4, 2008, that as long as one person remains struggling on the outside, we will continue resisting until there is justice.

Militant/Eric Simpson

June 16 picket line in San Francisco protests Supreme Court decision the previous day to not hear case of five framed-up Cuban revolutionaries locked up in U.S. prisons.

September 2008 message

Somebody recently mentioned that the Supreme Court now has the last word. I would say it has only the next-to-last word. In the case of the Five, it is you who have the last word: our brothers and sisters in Cuba, the United States, and around the world, who throughout these years have been our main source of encouragement.

We do not place our hopes on any court. Ten years are more than enough to have cured us of any naïveté. Our hope lies with you, who, through your sacrifices and swimming against the stream, have made possible the fact that today the injustice committed against the Five has become known on every continent. . . .

We know right is on our side, but to win real justice we need a jury of millions of people throughout the world. We need you, the defenders of just causes, to make our truth be known.

UN hearing condemns U.S. on Puerto Rico

Continued from page 7

since the 1930s.

Susler also demanded the U.S. government "identify and hold criminally liable all those responsible for the assassination of Filiberto Ojeda Ríos, Santiago Mari Pesquera, Carlos Muñiz Varela, and other militants of the Puerto Rican independence movement." Ojeda Ríos was shot to death by FBI agents in 2005. The independence movement has accused federal cops of complicity in the killings of Mari Pesquera in 1976 and Muñiz Varela in 1979.

Sam Manuel of the Socialist Workers Party said a successful struggle to win independence for Puerto Rico is in the interests of vast majority of people in the United States (see statement on page 7).

Myrna Pagán of the Committee for the Rescue and Development of Vieques reported that, while the U.S. Navy was forced by sustained protests to stop half a century of bombing practice on the island of Vieques, local residents continue to suffer high levels of cancer and other ailments due to depleted uranium and other pollutants dumped there by the U.S. military.

A few speakers supported Puerto Rico's colonial status. Héctor Ferrer of the Popular Democratic Party (PPD) called for "enhancing" the island's current "commonwealth" form of limited autonomy. Anthony Mele, chairman of the 65th Infantry Regiment Honor Task Force, argued for Puerto Rico to become the 51st U.S. state. Puerto Rico's governor, Luis Fortuño, belongs to the prostatehood New Progressive Party (PNP).

Following the testimony, decolonization committee members from Dominica, Nicaragua, Panama, Ecuador, Saint Vincent, Venezuela, Bolivia, Syria, and Iran spoke in favor of the resolution, which was approved by consensus.

In concluding remarks ambassador Moreno said that "Cuba will continue to uphold the legitimate right of the Puerto Rican people to self-determination and independence, with our irrevocable commitment to walk with them to the final victory."

After the hearing, pro-independence participants attended a reception hosted by the Friends of the Puerto Rico Committee at the United Nations and a public forum organized by ProLibertad at John Jay College.

Political life of Tom Leonard celebrated

Continued from front page

chartered in the summer of 1970. Houston was a Ku Klux Klan–ridden city, with this racist and antilabor outfit having deep roots in the police department and at city hall, said Sandler.

In March 1971 the SWP headquarters was firebombed. The Klan tried to bust into the party headquarters but were turned back. A couple months after the firebombing, the party's offices were shot full of bullet holes. The company insuring the building canceled its policy and for a few months the party could not get offices anywhere.

Sandler described how members of the SWP in Houston organized with others to spend nights guarding Fred Brode and his home. Brode was a leader of the movement against the Vietnam War whose house was frequently shot at by the KKK. The Pacifica radio station was firebombed. The Chicano rights movement and Black rights fighters faced similar rightist and racist violence.

The SWP worked with all kinds of forces to defend democratic rights and freedom of speech. Debbie Leonard, SWP candidate for Houston mayor, had televised debates with Frank Converse, head of the Klan. These debates received widespread publicity and exposed the lack of action against the Klan by city officials. As a result of this work with others, four Klansmen were indicted in June 1971 for acts of terrorism in the bombing of the SWP offices three months earlier.

In the mid-1970s members of the United Steelworkers of America began a struggle for the right to vote on their contracts. Part of this fight was the candidacy of Ed Sadlowski for president of the international union. Tom Leonard was a member of the Steelworkers union at that time and an activist in the Sadlowski campaign.

As part of his remarks, Sandler reviewed some of Leonard's political experiences as a merchant seaman in World War II. "He studied on those ships. He read literature of the world, though he was modest about it. He never forgot the connection of struggles of the working class in this country to struggles around the world," Sandler said.

Sandler concluded his remarks by thanking, on behalf of the Socialist Workers Party National Committee, the many contributors to the Maritime Project Fund and the Houston branch for making the work possible.

Participants stayed for hours after the meeting enjoying food and refreshments, getting to know each other, and continuing political discussion on a wide range of topics. Participants at the meeting came from Houston, San Antonio, New Orleans, New York, Seattle, San Francisco, and Atlanta. A national celebration of Leonard's life and contributions will be held July 11 in New York during the party's effort to get on the ballot in New York City.

Celebrate the life and political contributions of Tom Leonard

NEW YORK

Saturday, July 11

Dinner 6:30 p.m.—Program 8 p.m.

Chairperson: Jack Barnes, national secretary, Socialist Workers Party

Speakers: Mary-Alice Waters, editor of 'New International' magazine; Norton Sandler, SWP National Committee; Ben Joyce, Young Socialists.

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EDITORIAL

Affirmative action is necessary

The June 29 Supreme Court ruling in the case of firefighters in New Haven, Connecticut, is a blow to the labor movement. It gives the employers another wedge to deepen divisions in the working class as they press their offensive against our wages and working conditions.

Fire departments are notorious for discrimination in hiring of Blacks, other oppressed nationalities, and women. Their bigotry was so pronounced that in 1972 Congress mentioned them by name when it extended Title VII of the 1964 Civil Rights Act to public employment. Now the majority of the high court is trying to stand Title VII—which outlaws discrimination in hiring and on the job—on its head.

Justice Anthony Kennedy, who wrote the majority opinion for the court, argued, "The city rejected the test results solely because the higher scoring candidates were white."

The Obama administration followed suit, with the Justice Department submitting a friend-of-the-court brief to the Supreme Court arguing that the case should be sent back to the lower courts to see if the city was misusing Title VII as "a pretext for intentional racial discrimination."

There is *no way* to overcome racial discrimination against Blacks unless you take race, and in the case of women, sex into account. And the only way to force the employers to break with longstanding discriminatory practices is to set quotas in hiring and promotion.

Affirmative action is one of the biggest gains for the labor movement in recent decades. It is a product of civil rights battles of the 1960s that extended workers' social wage, including the establishment of Medicaid, Medicare, and Supplemental Security Income benefits for the blind, disabled, and elderly. Defense of affirmative action is a necessary step in strengthening the increased unity of the working class won in that great social movement.

Defending affirmative action is especially important now as the bosses use the contraction of the capitalist economy to pit workers against one another. The current mass layoffs threaten to wipe out past gains for affirmative action as Blacks, Latinos, and women often become the "last hired, first fired."

To minimize the consequences of these layoffs, the unions should insist on the establishment of dual seniority lists—one for Blacks, other oppressed nationalities, and women; another for other workers—so that the percentage of Blacks, Latinos, and women in the workplace doesn't decline.

High court ruling on firefighters case

Continued from front page

Court Justice Anthony Kennedy said, "The city rejected the test results solely because the higher scoring candidates were white." Judge Kennedy's opinion ignored the history of race discrimination in the New Haven fire department.

Justice Ruth Ginsburg drafted the minority position upholding the city's decision. The white firefighters who received high scores "had no vested right to promotion," she argued. "Nor have other persons received promotions in preference to them." To accept the results of the promotional test, she wrote, would only reinforce the discriminatory practices that continue to exist in the department.

An amicus brief filed in the case by the NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund detailed the historic segregation of U.S. fire departments. Many departments hired no Blacks until the 1950s or 1960s, and those that did maintained separate firehouses for Blacks and whites. Chicago, for example, had two separate firefighting companies until 1965. Washington, D.C., fire stations were desegregated in the 1960s, but for another decade Black firefighters had to sleep in "C" beds and eat from "C" dishes using "C" utensils. "C" stood for "Colored."

New Haven's population today is 24 percent Latino, 36 percent Black, and 44 percent white. But the fire department is 15 percent Latino, 28 percent Black, and 57 percent white. Only 18 percent of officers are Black or Latino. Only one of the 21 captains is Black.

At a news conference June 24 in New Haven, Latino and African American firefighters joined the NAACP in urging the Supreme Court to reject the case.

As of 2007, out of 288,000 firefighters in the United States, 247,000 were white—235,000 of those were men. According to the New Haven Firebirds, a fraternal order of African American firefighters, only 11 of the city's firefighters are women.

The Obama administration's Justice Department submitted an amicus brief that argued the city of New Haven was within its rights to decide not to accept the test's results. But the brief claimed the city might be misusing Title VII as "a pretext for intentional racial discrimination." It called on the high court to send the case back to the lower courts for reexamination.

U.S. Navy shadows N. Korean cargo ship

Continued from front page

arms. Member states are also called upon to inspect suspected vessels on the high seas.

The permanent members of the UN Security Council are the governments of China, France, Russia, the United Kingdom, and the United States. All have active nuclear arsenals and intercontinental delivery systems and have carried out nuclear tests throughout much of the second half of the 20th century.

U.S. president Barack Obama ordered June 24 that additional sanctions imposed on North Korea by Washington be renewed for another year. Obama said that the existence of nuclear weapons in that country poses "an unusual and extraordinary threat to the national security and foreign policy of the United States."

Washington introduced nuclear weapons to the Korean peninsula five years after the 1950–53 Korean War, which ended in U.S. imperialism's first military defeat. Today the U.S. military maintains nuclear weapons throughout the region.

An unnamed U.S. official said that the destroyer USS *John S. McCain* has no orders to intercept the ship, according to a June 24 dispatch from Britain's Press Association. It also said that the vessel will need to stop to refuel soon on the 4,100-mile, two-week trip to Myanmar. The UN resolution calls for member states to refuse services such as refueling to ships accused of carrying banned cargo. Officials in Singapore, the world's largest refueling hub, say they will "act appropriately" if the ship docks at its port.

Meanwhile, Washington is reacting in anticipation of a test of a long-range missile. U.S. defense secretary Robert Gates said June 18 that he ordered the deployment to Hawaii of the SBX sea-based radar system in the Pacific and missile interceptors designed to destroy incoming missiles in the final stages of their flight path. Antiballistic missiles are already deployed on U.S. warships throughout the Pacific and on bases in Alaska and California.

Washington has some 28,000 troops on the Korean peninsula today and routinely carries out joint military exercises with South Korean forces.

U.S. imperialism has been working for decades to regain first-strike capability to use its nuclear arsenal unchecked, as it did in 1945, when it incinerated hundreds of thousands of Japanese civilians in the bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. In mid-April Gates announced aspects of the proposed war budget for 2010, which includes the addition of six warships equipped with the Aegis antiballistic missile system.

North Korea continues to assert its right to self-defense. A June 20 article from the Korean Central News Agency states that "the enemies' tightened 'sanctions' and 'blockade' would only embolden [the Korean people] to wage a more courageous struggle in defense of the sovereignty of the country."

Afghanistan war

Continued from front page

vid McKiernan, who was forced out by Defense Secretary Robert Gates. McChrystal graduated from West Point in 1976 and specializes in highly secretive missions known as "Black Ops." He has spent much of his time working with elite units, including the Green Berets, the army's Delta Force, Airborne Rangers, Navy Seals, and other covert forces. He is credited with the capture of Saddam Hussein and the tracking down and killing of Abu Mousab al-Zarqawi, the founder of al-Qaeda in Iraq.

"I did spend an awful lot of time as a counterterrorist which was in the hunter-killer mode," McChrystal said in an interview in Kabul with National Public Radio. He said he would stress "the importance of the building side" in his new assignment.

The 400 officers who are part of the cell will be assigned to Afghanistan for at least three-year terms and will be expected to follow events there even when on rotation in the United States.

The number of U.S. troops in Iraq and Afghanistan combined is approaching the level that it was at the height of the so-called surge in Iraq in 2007. There are currently 177,000 U.S. troops total in both countries, 43,000 of them in Afghanistan. The Pentagon says its goal is to have 68,000 U.S. soldiers stationed in Afghanistan before the end of the year.

Afghan security forces, including police and soldiers, have grown from 15,000 in May 2003 to 170,000 in May 2009.

U.S. forces do most of the fighting

McChrystal heads up what on paper is a U.S.-led NATO operation with troops from 42 countries, but more than ever the bulk of the combat is being carried out by U.S. forces. Washington's allies are unwilling to take substantial casualties. British prime minister Gordon Brown recently refused to send a battle group of 2,000 soldiers to Helmand Province in the south, the scene of heavy fighting.

The Canadian government confirmed last week that it plans to withdraw all of its 2,830 troops from Afghanistan within two years. Some 3,460 German troops are based mostly in the north, where there is little Taliban presence.

While escalating the war in Afghanistan, Washington has also stepped up its collaboration with the Pakistani government to move against a variety of Taliban forces there.

Pilotless drones, guided from a command center in the United States, launched several missiles against Taliban supporters in Pakistan's South Waziristan area June 24. South Waziristan, which borders Afghanistan, is a stronghold for Baitullah Mehsud, who heads the major Taliban organization in Pakistan.

The drones reportedly killed seven Taliban fighters earlier in the day and then attacked their funeral, killing as many as 70 people.

Anti-Taliban offensive in Pakistan

The Pakistani military has been launching air strikes against Mehsud's forces in the region for more than a week in preparation for a ground attack. The Pakistani army said June 22 that it was entering the final phase of its anti-Taliban offensive in Swat and claimed it was now safe for government officials to return to most of the region. Swat, a mountain valley just 100 miles northwest of Pakistan's capital Islamabad and once known as the Switzerland of Pakistan, does not share a border with Afghanistan.

Three million people have fled Swat and the surrounding area in the course of Pakistani military operations since last August. In anticipation of the coming offensive, 45,000 have already fled South Waziristan.

In a show both of U.S. support to the Pakistani operation and of enthusiasm by the Pakistani military for the U.S. course, former UN ambassador Richard Holbrooke, appointed by President Barack Obama as the Special Representative for Afghanistan and Pakistan, toured Swat in early June. He met with Pakistan president Asif Zardari; prime minister and opposition leader Nawaz Sharif; Gen. Ashfaq Kiyani, the head of the Pakistani army; and Gen. Ahmed Pasha, the head of Pakistan's Inter-Services Intelligence agency.

On June 24 the U.S. Senate approved tripling U.S. aid to Pakistan to $1.5 billion a year.